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My name is Mary Carr Allen, and I am a dual Public Health and PA student at Campbell University. Throughout my clinical year, my desire to encourage and empower patients to reach their full potential has increasingly become important to me. One of my God-given gifts is the ability to bring out the best in others. I recognize the battle of addiction, and I know how to deeply connect with people so that they feel heard and understood. I am interested in learning how I could leverage this through a career in addiction medicine, and I am excited to weave in my Public Health background.

Over the past few years, I have had the realization that we are all addicted to something. Whether it's a Diet Coke or a specific workout routine or a TV show or alcohol, it is natural for humans to desire consistency as part of our lives. As creatures of habit, we can sometimes feel "stuck" in certain patterns, and there are times when we feel like it is too late to make a change because this is simply "how I've always been." The shame creeps in when we begin to recognize that this habit is only temporarily fulfilling while it is destroying relationships, health, and future.

Alcoholism runs in my family, and I have seen firsthand the grip that it can have on a person's life. I have also seen the victory that comes with sobriety. I want to be a part of the Addiction Medicine Conference, mainly because I want to learn more about the potential of working in addiction medicine. My psychiatry rotation was in an outpatient clinic whose focus was on addiction recovery and other mental health issues. During my four weeks at this clinic, I was humbled by all the patients who desired to make significant life changes to benefit their future.

As I have begun to internally process the power of addiction, I have noted that the first place of healing begins when we recognize that certain addictions can be harmful to our bodies, and thus, our futures. It is hard, and sometimes feels impossible, to remove ourselves from addictive substances. I want to learn how to better equip individuals with the tools and resources they need to make healthy changes, and I desire to empower and encourage my patients so that they believe their lives are worthy. I am hopeful that a weekend at the Addiction Medicine Conference can enlighten me about ways to be a stronger provider and guide me in my decision-making about whether this is the career path I want to take.

The medical profession comes with great responsibility and risk, but it also presents the opportunity to do the extraordinary: to spend a career making lives easier, different, or even just possible. I am thankful for the opportunity to work as a Physician Assistant, and I am excited about the potential of leveraging my gifts of encouragement, empowerment, hope, and human connection through the platform of addiction medicine.